

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A gaming method, comprising:
 - designating a gaming tournament time of a gaming tournament, the gaming tournament time having a start time and an end time;
 - receiving enrollment data from a plurality of players at respective gaming computers, wherein enrollment data corresponding to a first player of the plurality of players indicates the first player wishes to play in the gaming tournament for a first subset of the gaming tournament time;
 - 10 enabling each of the gaming computers for playing at least one game in the gaming tournament during the gaming tournament time, wherein the gaming computer corresponding to the first player is enabled for the first subset of the gaming tournament time;
 - 15 determining a first winning player, if any, from the plurality of players based on outcomes of the games played by the plurality of players; and
 - if the first winning player is determined, generating data indicative of a first value payout to be awarded to the first winning player.
2. A gaming method according to claim 1, further comprising:
 - 20 determining a second winning player, if any, from the plurality of players based on the outcomes of the games played by the plurality of players; and
 - if the second winning player is determined, generating data indicative of a second value payout to be awarded to the second winning player.
- 25 3. A gaming method according to claim 1, further comprising, if a plurality of winning players are determined, generating data indicative of a plurality of value payouts to be awarded to the plurality of winning players, wherein the plurality of value payouts comprise a plurality of shares of a jackpot.

4. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein enrollment data corresponding to a second player of the plurality of players indicates the second player wishes to play in the gaming tournament for a second subset of the gaming tournament time, wherein the second subset is different than the first subset.

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5. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein a start time of the first subset of the gaming tournament time is greater than or equal to the start time of the gaming tournament.

10 6. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein an end time of the first subset of the gaming tournament time is less than or equal to the end time of the gaming tournament.

15 7. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the enrollment data corresponding to the first player includes an indication of a desired start time of the first subset of the gaming tournament time.

20 8. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the enrollment data corresponding to the first player includes an indication of a desired end time of the first subset of the gaming tournament time.

25 9. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the gaming tournament time comprises a plurality of gaming tournament time slots, wherein the enrollment data corresponding to the first player includes an indication of at least one gaming tournament time slot of the plurality of gaming tournament time slots.

10. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the gaming tournament time is a contiguous time segment.

11. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the gaming tournament time comprises a plurality of non-contiguous time segments.

12. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the first subset is a
5 contiguous time segment.

13. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the first subset comprises a plurality of non-contiguous time segments.

10 14. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the gaming tournament time comprises at least a first round and a second round;
wherein, if the first player plays in the first round, the first subset comprises at least a subset of the first round;
wherein, if the first player plays in the second round, the first subset comprises
15 at least a subset of the second round.

15. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein the enrollment data corresponding to the first player includes an indication of a desired number of games.

20 16. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein if the winning player is the first player, the value payout is based on the length of the first subset of the gaming tournament time.

17. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein if the winning player
25 is the first player, the value payout is based on a number of games played by the first player during the gaming tournament time.

18. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein, during the gaming tournament time, each player is awarded points based on outcomes of the at least one

game played by the player, the method further comprising configuring the gaming computer corresponding to the first player such that the amount of points awarded to the first player for a given outcome is based on the length of time of the first subset of the gaming tournament time.

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19. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein, during the gaming tournament time, each player is awarded points based on outcomes of the at least one game played by the player, the method further comprising configuring the gaming computer corresponding to the first player such that the amount of points awarded to 10 the first player for a given outcome is based on a number of games played by the first player during the gaming tournament time.

20. A gaming method according to claim 1, wherein at least one player of the plurality of players is a team, the team comprising a plurality of team players, the 15 method further comprising:

receiving enrollment data from the plurality of teams players at the respective gaming computers of the team players, wherein enrollment data corresponding to each team player indicates the team player wishes to play in the gaming tournament for a respective team subset of the gaming tournament time, each respective team subset of 20 the gaming tournament time being non-overlapping in time with the other team subsets of the gaming tournament time;

enabling each of the respective gaming computers of the team players for playing at least one game in the gaming tournament for the respective team subset of the gaming tournament time;

25 wherein, if the team is determined as the first winning player, the value payout is to be awarded to the plurality of team players.

21. A tournament server, comprising:

5 a network interface;

 a controller operatively coupled to the network interface, the controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to the processor, the controller configured to:

 designate a gaming tournament time of a gaming tournament, the gaming tournament time having a start time and an end time;

 operatively couple to a plurality of gaming computers via the network interface;

10 receive enrollment data from a plurality of players at respective gaming computers, wherein enrollment data corresponding to a first player of the plurality of players indicates the first player wishes to play in the gaming tournament for a first subset of the gaming tournament time;

15 enable each of the gaming computers for playing at least one game in the gaming tournament during the gaming tournament time, wherein the gaming computer corresponding to the first player is enabled for the first subset of the gaming tournament time;

 determine a first winning player, if any, from the plurality of players based on outcomes of the games played by the plurality of players; and

20 if the first winning player is determined, generate data indicative of a first value payout to be awarded to the first winning player.

22. A tournament server according to claim 21, wherein the controller is further configured to:

25 determine data indicative of outcomes of at least some of the games played by at least some of the plurality of players; and

 transmit the data indicative of outcomes to appropriate gaming computers of the plurality of gaming computers.

23. A gaming system, comprising:

a plurality of gaming units that may be used by a plurality of tournament players, one of said gaming units comprising:

a value input device;

5 a display unit;

a gaming unit network interface;

a gaming unit controller operatively coupled to the value input device, the display unit, and the gaming unit network interface, the gaming unit controller comprising a gaming unit processor and a gaming unit memory operatively coupled to the gaming unit processor, the gaming unit controller configured to:

prompt a tournament player of the plurality of tournament players to submit a fee, via the value input device, to join a gaming tournament;

15 in response to the tournament player submitting the fee,
generate data indicating that the tournament player submitted the fee;

cause a video image representing a game to be generated on the display unit, the game being part of the gaming tournament;

a tournament server comprising:

20 a tournament server network interface;

a tournament server controller operatively coupled to the tournament server network interface, the tournament server controller comprising a tournament server processor and a tournament server memory operatively coupled to the tournament server processor, the tournament server controller configured to:

designate a gaming tournament time of the gaming tournament, the gaming tournament time having a start time and an end time;

operatively couple to the plurality of gaming units via the tournament server network interface;

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receive enrollment data from the plurality of players at respective gaming units of the plurality of gaming units, wherein enrollment data corresponding to a first tournament player of the plurality of tournament players indicates the first tournament player wishes to play in the gaming tournament for a first subset of the gaming tournament time;

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enable each of the respective gaming units for playing at least one game in the gaming tournament during the gaming tournament time, wherein the gaming unit corresponding to the first tournament player is enabled for the first subset of the gaming tournament time;

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determine a first winning player, if any, from the plurality of tournament players based on outcomes of the games played by the plurality of tournament players; and

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if the first winning player is determined, generate data indicative of a first value payout to be awarded to the first winning player.

24. A gaming system according to claim 23, wherein the gaming unit controller is further configured to determine data indicative of an outcome of at least one game.

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25. A gaming system according to claim 23, wherein the tournament server controller is further configured to:

determine data indicative of outcomes of at least some of the games played by at least some of the plurality of players; and

transmit the data indicative of outcomes to appropriate gaming units of the plurality of gaming units.

26. A gaming method, comprising:

designating a gaming tournament time of a gaming tournament, the gaming tournament time having a start time and an end time;

5 receiving enrollment data from a plurality of first players at respective player computers;

enabling each of the player computers for playing at least one game in the gaming tournament during the gaming tournament time;

10 receiving enrollment data from a second player including authorization data indicative of the second player authorizing a software agent to play games in the gaming tournament on behalf of the second player, the software agent to be executed by a proxy computer;

enabling the software agent to play at least one game via the proxy computer during the gaming tournament time;

15 determining a first winning player, if any, from the plurality of first players and the second player based on outcomes of the games played by the plurality of first players and the software agent; and

if the first winning player is determined, generating data indicative of a first value payout to be awarded to the first winning player.

20 27. A gaming method according to claim 26, further comprising:

determining a second winning player, if any, from the plurality of first players and the second player based on outcomes of the games played by the plurality of first players and the software agent; and

25 if the second winning player is determined, generating data indicative of a second value payout to be awarded to the second winning player.

28. A gaming method according to claim 26, further comprising
configuring a game playing behavior of the software agent.

29. A gaming method according to claim 28, wherein configuring the game playing behavior of the software agent includes configuring the software agent to play according to a particular skill level.

5 30. A gaming method according to claim 28, wherein configuring the game playing behavior of the software agent includes configuring the software agent to play according to a particular risk level.

10 31. A gaming method according to claim 28, wherein configuring the game playing behavior of the software agent includes prompting the second player to answer a questionnaire.

15 32. A gaming method according to claim 28, wherein configuring the game playing behavior of the software agent includes prompting the second player to select a template from a plurality of templates, wherein at least some of the templates corresponding to different game playing behaviors.

20 33. A gaming method according to claim 32, wherein the game playing behavior associated with each of at least some of the plurality of templates corresponds to a game playing behavior of a corresponding personality.

34. A gaming method according to claim 33, wherein the game playing behavior of the corresponding personality corresponds to game playing behavior of a fictional person.

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35. A gaming method according to claim 33, wherein the game playing behavior of the corresponding personality corresponds to game playing behavior of a famous person.

36. A gaming method according to claim 28, further comprising analyzing game playing behavior of the second player to generate behavior parameters;

wherein configuring the game playing behavior of the software agent includes configuring the software agent to play according to the generated behavior parameters.

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37. A gaming method according to claim 36, wherein analyzing game playing behavior of the second player includes analyzing actions of the second player during game play.

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38. A gaming method according to claim 36, wherein analyzing game playing behavior of the second player includes analyzing player tracking information associated with the second player.

39. A tournament server, comprising:

 a network interface;

 a controller operatively coupled to the network interface, the controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to the processor, the controller configured to:

 designate a gaming tournament time of a gaming tournament, the gaming tournament time having a start time and an end time;

 receive enrollment data from a plurality of first players at respective player computers operatively coupled to the tournament server via the network interface;

 enable each of the player computers for playing at least one game in the gaming tournament during the gaming tournament time;

 receive enrollment data from a second player via the network interface, the enrollment data including authorization data indicative of the second player authorizing a software agent to play games in the gaming tournament on behalf of the second player, the software agent to be executed by a proxy computer;

 enable the software agent to play at least one game via the proxy computer during the gaming tournament time;

 20 determine a first winning player, if any, from the plurality of first players and the second player based on outcomes of the games played by the plurality of first players and the software agent; and

 if the first winning player is determined, generating data indicative of a first value payout to be awarded to the first winning player.

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40. A tournament server according to claim 39, wherein the proxy computer is separate from the tournament server, and wherein the proxy computer is operatively coupled to the tournament server via the network interface.

41. A tournament server according to claim 39, wherein the proxy computer comprises the tournament server.

42. A gaming method, comprising:

5 receiving, within a time period, a plurality of requests to join a gaming tournament from a plurality of players via a plurality of player computers;

determining a number of players in the plurality of players based on the number of requests received in the time period;

10 if the number of players is less than a predetermined number, generating at least one virtual player such that the number of players and the at least one virtual player is at least the predetermined number, wherein the at least one virtual player comprises a software agent executed by a computer gaming system;

determine at least one game playing behavior according to which the software agent is to play;

15 configuring the software agent to play according to the at least one game playing behavior;

designating a gaming tournament time of a gaming tournament, the gaming tournament time having a start time and an end time, wherein the start time is proximate to the time period;

20 enabling the respective player computers for playing at least one game during the gaming tournament time;

enabling each virtual player of the at least one virtual player to play at least one game via the computer gaming system during the gaming tournament time;

25 determining a winning player from the plurality of players and the at least one virtual player based on outcomes of the games played by the plurality of players and the virtual player; and

if the winning player is from the plurality of players, generating data indicative of a value payout to be awarded to the winning player.

43. A gaming method according to claim 42, wherein determining the at least one game playing behavior comprises selecting a skill level from a plurality of skill levels.

5 44. A gaming method according to claim 42, wherein determining the at least one game playing behavior comprises selecting a risk level from a plurality of risk levels.

10 45. A gaming method according to claim 42, wherein determining the at least one game playing behavior comprises determining a speed at which the software agent is to play.

15 46. A gaming method according to claim 42, wherein determining the at least one game playing behavior comprises selecting a speed from a plurality of speeds.

20 47. A gaming method according to claim 42, wherein determining the at least one game playing behavior comprises selecting a template from a plurality of templates, wherein at least some of the templates corresponding to different game playing behaviors.

25 48. A gaming method according to claim 47, wherein the game playing behavior associated with each of at least some of the plurality of templates corresponds to a game playing behavior of a corresponding personality.

49. A gaming method according to claim 48, wherein the game playing behavior of the corresponding personality corresponds to game playing behavior of a fictional person.

50. A gaming method according to claim 48, wherein the game playing behavior of the corresponding personality corresponds to game playing behavior of a famous person.

51. A tournament server, comprising:

a network interface;

a controller operatively coupled to the network interface, the controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to the processor, the

5 controller configured to:

receive, within a time period, a plurality of requests to join a gaming tournament from a plurality of players via a plurality of player computers, wherein the plurality of player computers are operatively coupled to the tournament server via the network interface;

10 determine a number of players in the plurality of players based on the number of requests received in the time period;

if the number of players is less than a predetermined number, generate at least one virtual player such that the number of players and the at least one virtual player is at least the predetermined number, wherein the at least one virtual player comprises a software agent executed by a computer gaming system;

15 select at least one game playing behavior from a plurality of game playing behaviors;

20 configure the software agent to play according to the at least one selected game playing behavior;

designate a gaming tournament time of a gaming tournament, the gaming tournament time having a start time and an end time, wherein the start time is proximate to the time period;

25 enable the respective player computers for playing at least one game during the gaming tournament time;

enable each virtual player of the at least one virtual player to play at least one game via the computer gaming system during the gaming tournament time;

determine a winning player from the plurality of players and the at least one virtual player based on outcomes of the games played by the plurality of players and the virtual player; and

if the winning player is from the plurality of players, generate data indicative of a value payout to be awarded to the winning player.